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PP RUEHGR
DE RUEHWN #0312/01 0481744
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P 171744Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1907
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1374
RUEHCV/USDAO CARACAS VE
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRIDGETOWN 000312

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR AND OAS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ENRG](#) [CU](#) [VE](#) [ST](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: ST. LUCIA: FORMER PRIME MINISTER CONCERNED ABOUT
TIES TO VENEZUELA AND CUBA

REF: A. 05 BRIDGETOWN 1698

[1](#)B. 05 BRIDGETOWN 1954

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Former St. Lucia Prime Minister John Compton has warned against the deepening ties between CARICOM member states, Venezuela and Cuba. Compton, leader of the opposition United Workers Party, expressed his concern that St. Lucia Prime Minister Kenny Anthony and other Caribbean leaders are in danger of putting the region on a confrontation course with the U.S. by cozying up to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Cuban President Fidel Castro. The former PM fears that the U.S. may retaliate against St. Lucia by issuing a travel advisory that could devastate its tourism industry. Compton is likely expressing genuine concern over the region's increasing ties with these undemocratic states, while also seeking to make this a political issue in advance of elections that are expected in St. Lucia later this year. End summary.

An Anti-American Alliance

[1](#)2. (U) St. Lucia opposition leader John Compton recently expressed to the press his concern over the Caribbean's increasingly "warm relations" with Venezuela and Cuba. Compton, who served as St. Lucia PM from 1964 to 1979 and again from 1982 to 1996, warned that CARICOM members could run the risk of antagonizing the U.S. by cozying up to these two states whose deepening alliance is clearly anti-American. Compton said that St. Lucia must be "wary" of this trend because of the small nation's economic dependence on the U.S., from which more than a third of all tourists traveling to the island originate.

Possible Confrontation in the OAS

[1](#)3. (SBU) Compton believes that Venezuela's efforts to increase its influence in the Caribbean through the PetroCaribe oil initiative and direct aid to the Eastern Caribbean's small, economically troubled island states may put the region on the wrong side of a U.S.-Venezuela dispute. "We are getting ourselves deep into the water and we do not have a life jacket," he told the press. Compton explained during a recent meeting with Poloff that Venezuelan President Chavez will one day find his "back against the wall" in the OAS where the U.S. may seek a vote condemning Venezuela over

human rights, a stolen election or some other issue. Chavez will then call upon his Caribbean allies for support in an organization where they constitute nearly half the member states. If they do, the U.S., he believes, will retaliate. In the case of St. Lucia, Compton suggested that the USG could issue a travel advisory warning of the country's increasing crime problem, which would devastate the tourism industry.

14. (SBU) Note: In St. Vincent, leaders of the opposition New Democratic Party expressed a similar concern over Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves's increasingly warm relations with Presidents Chavez and Castro. They recently asked Poloff if the USG would punish St. Vincent by lowering the "quota" of visas issued to Vincentians or even by cutting them off from visas altogether. End note.

Cold War Behavior

15. (U) St. Lucia PM Kenny Anthony strongly denounced his predecessor's remarks regarding Venezuela and Cuba. Saying to the press that Compton's attitude toward Cuba "reeks of Cold War behavior," Anthony went out of his way to defend the close ties between CARICOM members and the communist state, which, he explained, is providing the region with extensive medical aid and educating hundreds of Caribbean students at Cuban universities (ref B).

Will Cuba and Venezuela be an Election Issue?

16. (SBU) Comment: When John Compton expresses his concern

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over the Caribbean's deepening ties with Cuba and Venezuela, the conservative former PM is probably displaying a genuine unease with the direction in which current leaders are taking the region. Typically well disposed to the U.S., Compton may also be preparing to make the evolving relationships with Cuba and Venezuela a political issue in advance of national elections due in St. Lucia by the end of 2006. The opposition attempted to do so in St. Vincent during the campaign leading up to that nation's December 2005 election (ref A), where the issue failed to resonate with voters. In St. Lucia, voters may also be willing to overlook the more troubling aspects of the Venezuelan and Cuban regimes because of the aid they provide. End comment.

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